

# The Campsfield Monitor

Newsletter of the Campaign to Close Campsfield

## BLUNKETT'S SPECTACULAR U-TURN Campsfield set to expand!

### The next ten years?

When the Home Secretary, David Blunkett, made his announcement on 7th February 2002, that Campsfield would close by 2004 because it was "outdated" and "inappropriate for the 21st century" it was greeted by supporters of the Campaign to Close Campsfield with joy but also a dose of scepticism - a scepticism now shown to be spot on.

Just two months later, in April last year, it was announced that the closure would be delayed because of the dearth of detention places created by the fire at Yarl's Wood. But Yarl's Wood reopened in September of this year - and Campsfield did not close. Worse was to come: Just a few weeks ago, as the Close Campsfield Campaign was beginning to gear up for the 10th anniversary of the Centre's opening, the minister for "Citizenship and Immigration", Beverley Hughes, announced that Campsfield was to stay open and be expanded from 184 to 290 places. This was a spectacular U-turn by the Government.



*Rooftop protest at start of mass hunger strike at Campsfield. March 1994.*

Local reaction of shock and dismay was reflected by the resolution to the County Council by Liberal Democrat councillor Janet Godden, that: "This Council was shocked at the announcement by the Minister for immigration on 22nd October 2003 of her plans to increase the number of places at Campsfield House immigration detention centre from 184 to 290. Council resolves to write to the Home Secretary, reminding him of his undertaking in February 2002 to close this detention centre, and calling on him to do so without delay."

It was carried by 28 votes to 8 with 10 abstentions. Labour Councillors led by Liz Brighthouse opposed the motion or abstained, councillor Chris Robbins of Kidlington being the only one of their number to speak in favour. As well as being wrong, their stance contradicts the policy of the 4 out of 6 constituency Labour Parties in Oxfordshire which have affiliated to the Campaign to Close Campsfield and consistently argued against detention. The councillors' action is being taken up in the Labour Party.

### What now?

After ten years of campaigning, the Close Campsfield Campaign has no choice but to carry on. Campsfield may not be a household name but it is a surprisingly well known one. Campsfield has a prominent position in the Detention Hall of Shame. When the first detainees were bussed in from Harmondsworth on 29 November 1993, it was the first substantial purpose-built detention accommodation in Britain. The other centres were smaller: Haslar was a former naval prison and Harmondsworth not much more than some old huts.

## 10 YEARS TOO LONG!

### Contents:

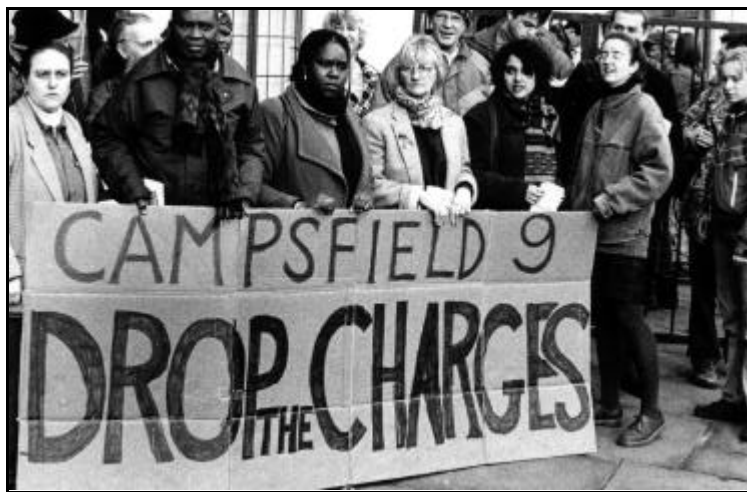
- 1 Campsfield to Expand
- 3 Campaign Work in 2003
- 3 Number Crunching - Migration Watch
- 4 Oxford Racial Equality Council

- 5 War on Asylum: recent developments
- 7 New Labour - Tough on Crime, Tougher on Asylum Seekers
- 8 10 year Photo Gallery
- 10 Stars support bail for refugees

- 11 Bail for Immigration Detainees
- 12 Yarl's Wood Update
- 13 No One is Illegal
- 14 Barbed Wire Britain
- 15 Bicester's Protests
- 16 Campaign Information & Contact details

At Campsfield, on the other hand, £20m had been spent expanding what had been a youth detention centre. Campsfield was heralded by the Tories as a "state of the art" centre when it opened. It soon became notorious.

Almost at once there were protests from inside Campsfield, letters to the centre manager, or Immigration, or a minister, petitions signed by many detainees, some of the biggest mass hunger strikes in the country's history and the uprisings or riots of 1994 and 1997. The campaign to close Campsfield has helped to magnify these protests and got a national profile by being active in many arenas using many methods.



## Local and National

With the resources built up locally in campaigning to close Campsfield and in supporting refugees in Oxford, we have a job to do to continue offering assistance in the setting up of new local anti detention groups, and contributing to national campaigns and lobbies concerning not just detention but also racism and chauvinism in government and the media, and wider issues concerning refugees and migration. The single most useful aspect of this may be to ensure that we work more closely with refugees and other migrants, whether current or former detainees, as it is they who will provide the strength and impetus that will force changes for the better in their predicament, through their own organisations. In and around Oxford, we will need to do a bit of getting "back to basics". Fresh and intensified approaches will need to be made to local Oxfordshire trade unions, political, student, faith and community organisations through street stalls, public meetings and talks in schools and colleges.

The answer to "What Now?" is to Carry On, but do so with an awareness that much has changed since 1993. Detention is one of the most extreme forms of state racism-discrimination on grounds of race. The government excluded Immigration matters from being covered by its most recent Race Relations Act. The Conservatives increased the "detention estate" from around 350 in 1993 to 700 in 1997. Since then Labour has capped that easily: nearly 2,000 places now, half way to the government target of 4,000 places (excluding immigration detainees in H.M. prisons proper). There are new mega centres (Europe's largest) at Yarl's Wood and Harmondsworth. In other words, campaigning against detention is arguably an even higher priority than in 1993.

*Demonstration at a preliminary hearing for the Campsfield 9. Oxford Crown, Court Feb 9th 1998.*

*Campsfield Hunger strike, 1998.*

Young people and students have been key to some of the most lively campaigning in the past. What about those university academics, 100 of whom signed a letter to The Times in 1994 calling for Campsfield to close? Time to say so again! In 1993 no national trade union opposed detention. Now, largely as a result of the work of supporters of the Campaign to Close Campsfield at least eight do, but with effort we can make that more. There must be new methods to try out or supporters in different fields to tap. Strengthening the link with the very strong campaign in Scotland against Dungavel will be useful on both sides of the border. And there is the smaller Maghaberry prison with its detention places in the north of Ireland to connect with. Finally, the Campsfield angle will continue to be important in the national and international movement against detention in ways referred to elsewhere in a report on Barbed Wire Britain.

### PROPOSED MASS HUNGER STRIKE

NAME	COUNTRY	ROOM NO	SIGNATURE
ADEN HAZIRI	Yugoslav	94B	
Yusef Huseini	Yugoslav	65A	
Iskender Pashkovi	Yugoslav	62A	
Mustafa Huseini	Yugoslav	96B	
Spiridon Jovanov	Bulgarian	52B	
Mustafa Osman	Bulgarian	53A	
Yusuf Nikolov	Bulgarian	54A	
Dr. Huseini	Romanian	55A	
Dr. Huseini	Romanian	56A	
Dr. Huseini	Romanian	57A	
Dr. Huseini	Romanian	58A	
Dr. Huseini	Romanian	59A	
Dr. Huseini	Romanian	60A	
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# Campaign work in 2003

**The monthly demonstrations at Campsfield's main gate have carried on since the announcement of closure. Sometimes the numbers have been around 10 or less, but there is always a useful exchange of news and planning between people from different places (not just Oxford but also the ever present Marxist Party from Coventry and others).**

The high point of the demo is always making a lot of noise round the back, over the fence from the detainees' yard. - a chance for shouted exchanges with the detainees who get a lift from the outspoken remarks and tolerate our efforts at singing and music. More accomplished visiting singers and musicians are of course appreciated without irony.

The meeting organised with Oxfordshire Race Equality Council (see page 4) was a step forward, and a victory after years of pressure from the campaign. It was a far cry from the only other OREC meeting on Campsfield, in about 1997, which shamefully was addressed only by Group 4 and Immigration officials - they got a very dusty reception.

Members of the campaign have spoken at numerous meetings, sometimes using the portable exhibition panels we have.

For two years running, the campaign has had a stall at the Cowley Road Carnival, this year alongside refugee support organisations in Oxford, and at the November One World fair in Oxford Town hall.

Campaign supporters played a big part in helping during the setting up of the Bicester Refugee Support group, which countered the initially simply chauvinist Bicester Action Group opposing the siting of a 750-place "accommodation centre" at Piddington outside Bicester. The Campaign also helped to bring BRS and Asylum Welcome together to make an impressive joint presentation to the public inquiry into the centre proposal, where BRS and AW were represented by Michael Hall.

Two bike rides have been organised jointly with BRS to make the connection in the public mind between Campsfield and Bicester centre and to raise campaign funds.

The most recent ride was promoted by Oxford Trades Union Council, whose president joined the ride with local members of the teachers, post office workers and local authority workers unions. There are signs of renewed student activity among Oxford University students. The Oxford University Labour Club has run a Students Against Campsfield Stall in Cornmarket and the Student Action for Refugees (STAR) group is visiting detainees at Campsfield and its members will join the bike ride on 29th November.

Campaign supporters distributed a leaflet headed "Why you should NOT work for Group 4" to those going into a Group 4 recruitment day at the Oxford Job Centre in Gloucester Green in October.

Following the "Campsfield to stay" announcement, we have started a mass letter writing campaign calling on Mr Blunkett to abide by his February 2002 closure statement. Copies of the letter are available. The Campaign was one of around 80 signatories to a big Campaign Against Legal Aid Cuts (CALAC) advert that appeared recently in the Guardian, calling for legal aid for asylum seekers not to be cut back, and was represented at the meeting at which that campaign was set up.

## Is asylum really a 'PROBLEM'?

### NUMBER CRUNCHING - BUT WATCH OUT FOR MIGRATION WATCH

**The number of asylum seekers is relatively small. Less than 2 per cent of refugees in the world as a whole are in Britain, although a recent poll showed that people believe the figure is 25 per cent.**

In 2002, the peak year, according to Home Office statistics on Control of Immigration, there were 84,130 asylum applications in Britain. In the same year, and in each of the preceding five years, there were around eight million visitors from abroad.

Moreover, removals have increased steadily under the Labour government, from 6,990 in 1998 to 10,740 in 2002, but apparently this is not enough.

So why do the think tank Migration Watch, widely quoted as an authority on immigration and the supposed dangers of 'over-population', claim that Britain can expect 2 million extra migrants in 10 years?

The answer is simply that the group, which leans on its connections with Oxford University, has a racist agenda. The B.N.P.'s web coverage of the group is illuminating. The headline "Ex-Ambassador makes a stand against immigration", referring to the organisation's chair, Sir Andrew Green, former ambassador to Saudi Arabia, clearly attempts to borrow credence from the profile of the fascist characters that make up this statistic twisting group.

The B.N.P go on to pre-empt accusations of racism, "Sir Andrew has tried to make sure that no one can accuse Migration Watch UK of being a racist organisation. "It's not racism, it's realism," he said."

But the reality is that Migration Watch is made up of committed racists. Migration Watch's chief researcher is Professor David Coleman, of Oxford university, who has held office in the Eugenics Society and its successor the Galton Institute, bodies which promote the notion that the purity of the white race should be preserved.

The main basis for Migration Watch UK's estimate is the official International Passenger Survey, which asks those arriving at British ports whether they intend to stay for 12 months or more. This includes British citizens returning to the country from abroad as well as foreign migrants. Even the Home Office admit that the group's argument is deeply flawed and that their analysis should be treated with "caution".

Nevertheless, the government, while perversely claiming that its asylum policies are necessary to defeat racism and the far right, panders to the sections of the media whose political agenda it is to stir up racism.

The Daily Mail, the Daily Express, the Sun have almost daily headlines disseminating lies and slander about asylum seekers and 'illegals', some of them using language and information which appear to have come from official sources, attacking refugees for supposed crimes, scrounging and ill health, for being too many, or for resorting to catching and eating swans. The government only very rarely seeks to counter the media's lies and distortions with the truth. The government encourages the Tories to outbid it by making half-baked proposals such as that all incoming asylum seekers should be confined to an unspecified off-shore island. The BNP has made full use of the growth of prejudice against asylum seekers in its sometimes successful local election campaigns, especially in areas where no asylum seekers or refugees live. Asylum seekers themselves, especially those who are being dispersed outside London and the South East where their communities are strong, are being subjected to increasing levels of violence, such that many fear to leave their accommodation.

# Oxford Racial Equality Council confronts "Immigration Detention in Oxfordshire Ten Years On"

The Institute of Race Relations has recorded on its web-site 24 deaths in racist attacks since 1999, including four murders of asylum seekers in the last two years, and ten major violent attacks, including, for example, systematic attacks on Iraqi Kurds in Hull, resulting in injuries to at least 13 of them; The Institute has also recorded 14 suicides of 'victims of the asylum system' in the last five years, three of them in immigration prisons.

Only last week, research commissioned by Article 19, a group that campaigns for free expression, has found that the British media's coverage of asylum seekers and refugees is characterised by stereotyping, exaggeration and inaccurate language.

After four years of asking, the Racial Equality Council in Oxford organised a public meeting with the title, "Immigration Detention in Oxfordshire Ten Years On". This co-operatively organised event took place in the Asian Cultural Centre on October 13th with support from the Campaign to Close Campsfield, Refugee Resource, Asylum Welcome, and OREC itself.

Speakers from the CRE, Asylum Welcome, and Bail for Immigration Detainees were joined by Jean-Baptiste Kygamba from Rwanda, an international journalist, genocide survivor who now has refugee status in the UK.

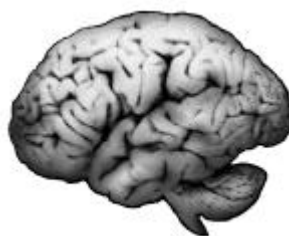
The evening began with the Campaign for Racial Equality describing their current policy on migrants, which is to actively support asylum seekers and migrants and to work against policies that will increase discrimination.

This was welcomed by the packed audience - around 60 people - representing ethnic minority community groups, and the various organisations working and campaigning with refugees in Oxfordshire.

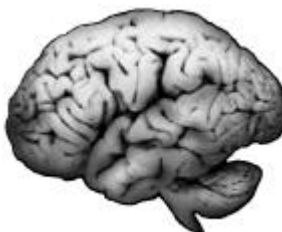
The audience pushed both the national CRE and the local REC hard on the importance of taking a lead against Campsfield House Removal Centre - which operates as a prison - and the proposed Bicester

Accommodation Centre - which will allow very restricted movement. These two places - one which already locks up 184 men and the other which is set to contain 750 men, women and children - show the worst inhumane extremes of the British government.

We hope the CRE and OREC will take strength in their new stand from the arguments and stories they heard during the evening.



**A British brain**



**A Refugee brain**



**A Racist brain**

Because by the end of the evening, with breaks for food and a chance to look at material on the reality facing migrants and those seeking refuge in Oxfordshire, the discussion was starkly focused on the rising tide of racism we face that comes directly from the way we treat refugees and the way the media and the government describe them.

Jean-Baptiste warned of the likely consequences of the inflammatory articles in the British papers; racist press, he said, led in Rwanda to racist violence - and racist murder. Tim Baster from BID

described the state racism detainees face every day in the virtual legal maze of the Immigration Courts, and in detention centres across the UK.

We also hope this will be one of many co-operative events between refugee support organisations, campaigning organisations, minority ethnic organisations and the Oxfordshire Racial Equality Council. Only by working together will we effectively challenge the racist policies on our own doorstep - and see the end of Immigration detention in Oxfordshire and the rest of the UK.



# The War on Asylum

## RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

In recent times, the application of immigration controls has become progressively more vicious. There has been virtually nothing in the way of improvement or reform. Everything has been done to make the suffering of refugees and migrants worse, in the largely mistaken belief that this will cut their numbers.

The viciousness has been directed overwhelmingly at refugees, or 'asylum seekers'. But it is also increasingly directed at others, mostly Caribbean, South Asian and African, who are described as 'over-stayers', picked up, detained and eventually deported. In the process the position of asylum seekers as the new object of race hate campaigns has become entrenched.

### JOINED UP THINKING - Wars create refugees

The demonisation of asylum seekers has no obvious justification. Such increases as there have been in their numbers are, more than ever, related to the wars perpetrated by the major powers: first Kosovans and then Iraqis (in the months before the US/British invasion of Iraq in March 2003) accounted for almost the entire increase.

Just this week it has been announced that the home secretary intends to start deporting some of the 14,000 Iraqis who fled here for protection when the government decided to bomb their homeland. What possible justification can there be for this when the shelling continues and our government continues to dig its hands in the public purse to help the Americans to fund the continued military presence?

In 2002 the largest numbers of refugees were from Iraq, Zimbabwe, Somalia, Afghanistan and China, in that order. As before, the overwhelming majority of asylum seekers come from areas in which there is severe political persecution or conflict. They surely deserve sympathy rather than vilification.

### THE CONTRIBUTION OF ASYLUM SEEKERS

Most asylum seekers, whatever their reason for migrating, are highly educated, and also willing to work long hours for low wages in jobs that do not require their qualifications. A recent Home Office report estimates that immigrants make a net contribution of approximately £2.5 billion a year to public finances, since they are mostly young, fit and have been educated at others' expense.

Despite this, the government is conducting what has become known as a 'war on asylum'. It attacks asylum seekers for their supposed abuse of the system and singles them out for harsh treatment. It drives them into illegality, locks them up, does not allow them to work, reduces them to destitution, splits up their families, labels them 'illegal immigrants' and promises to deport more of them if it can't stop them coming in the first place.

Some of this material is from the preface to a new edition of Teresa Hayter's book *'Open Borders: the case against immigration controls'*, to be published by Pluto Books in 2004.

[www.plutobooks.com/](http://www.plutobooks.com/)

It also increasingly rounds up others, who may have lived for years in this country and have jobs, houses and families, for sometimes minor infringements of the immigration rules.

### THE REAL COST OF "ASYLUM SEEKERS" - DESTITUTION AND DETENTION

Asylum seekers cost public money almost entirely because of the escalation of the repressive apparatus which is supposed to stop them coming here, and because they are no longer allowed to work. The cost of detaining asylum seekers ranges from £364 to £1620 per week. The government bears heavy responsibility for the growth of the hysteria against asylum seekers and so-called 'illegal immigrants' (the terms are often used interchangeably). It is hard to see why it thus aids and abets the racists, unless it is that it is so unpopular on most issues that it believes it can win a little popularity by appearing to be stemming a 'flood' of asylum seekers who might otherwise 'swamp' British schools and the welfare state.

*Continued overleaf...*



*The scene outside the opening of the Campsfield 9 trial. Oxford Crown Court, 1st June 1998.*

The detention of asylum seekers is one of the harshest consequences of immigration controls and causes great suffering for migrants and refugees. But it is little more than window-dressing. It does not serve its main function of deterring potential immigrants, and it does not even make it easy to deport people. In the end the government seems to be doing little other than trying to convince the opponents of immigration that it is keeping people out of Britain.

Immigration detention centres have been renamed 'removal centres'. The government has announced that it intends to increase the numbers detained to 4,000. Two big new detention centres at Harmondsworth, near Heathrow, and Yarl's Wood, near Bedford, opened in 2001 (see page 12), were meant to expand the 'detention estate'. But half the 550 spaces at Harmondsworth are no longer in use. Meanwhile, a Young Offenders' Institution at Dover, a prison at Dungavel near Glasgow and part of Lindholme prison near Doncaster have been redesignated as immigration prisons.

To facilitate removals the government has announced its intention to set up a smooth process under which asylum seekers are first to be sent to 'induction centres', then moved on to 'accommodation centres' or, failing that, made to report to 'reporting centres' from the accommodation to which they have been dispersed, and then, if their claims are rejected (but sometimes in practice before they are rejected), to 'removal centres'.

The induction centres and accommodation centres are not to be locked, but they are prisons in effect, with strong inducements and penalties for the people assigned to them not to leave, and they will operate a kind of curfew. The Home Office has stated that if people fail to obey 'clear rules' then not only will they lose all future public support, but 'breaking the rules may also affect their claims for asylum' (which must be unlawful under the rules of the refugee conventions). The centres will be built and run by private contractors.

According to the Oxford Mail of 1 October 2003, three companies are bidding to operate the Bicester accommodation prison: United Kingdom Detention Services, Group 4 and Premier Prisons. (See page 15)

There are to be medical, legal and educational facilities and meals provided within the centres, but no self-catering facilities and probably little transport. Children will not be allowed to go to local schools, so the chances of them learning English, let alone getting an adequate education and having the chance to integrate, will be minimal. The home secretary David Blunkett, outdoing his predecessor Jack Straw, said that schools were in danger of being 'swamped' by asylum seekers' children.

Meanwhile, increasing numbers of asylum seekers who are granted their liberty are finding themselves enslaved by poverty. Currently around 5,000, are being reduced to destitution. They are not allowed to work, and they receive nothing from the state.

# New Labour: Tough on Crime, Tougher on Asylum Seekers

"Refugees are not criminals" and "No one is illegal" are chants regularly shouted by campaigners at demonstrations. But New Labour is not listening. Rather, pandering to the racist and right wing agenda that dominates the asylum debate, New Labour has consistently implemented legislation and policies that are increasingly designed to penalize asylum seekers. Many of the basic fundamental rights and freedoms incorporated into English law by New Labour have been held simply not to apply to asylum seekers.



Rights that automatically accrue to defendants in the criminal justice system, such as the right not to be detained arbitrarily just do not apply to refugees and migrants not even accused of any crime. Of course, New Labour is also trying to whittle away the long established rights of criminal defendants.

Even in the darkest days of the Tories, refugees never faced the sheer destitution that the 2002 Act has subjected thousands to. Lawyers have had an up-hill battle to fight for miniscule benefits for asylum seekers who are not allowed to work and have been denied assistance on the basis that they have not applied quickly enough - in some cases as little as two hours has been held to be too slow! In some instances, lawyers have had to rely on case-law from 1803 to argue that such people cannot simply be left helpless and destitute.

A High Court judge recently ruled that asylum seekers do not have the right to have their interviews with the home office tape recorded, even at the expense of their own solicitor. Most cases are rejected on the basis of inconsistencies arising from interviews, often attended by poor interpreters. In the criminal justice system, the idea of having an unrecorded police interview would be unthinkable. And yet in extreme cases the penalties for refugees are far worse.

As the system is so tipped against applicants, it is crucial that lawyers are granted the resources to adequately represent their clients. But the government has announced, in a further twist of the screw, that legal aid to prepare for appeals will be limited to four hours for initial advice, including solicitors' travel time to remote detention centres and everything else, and five hours to prepare an appeal. In most cases, good conscientious solicitors know that they cannot remotely stay within these limits. So they may withdraw from the work, leaving what the government calls the 'legal aid gravy train' in the hands of the charlatans. Blair, in his speech to the Labour party's October 2003 conference, said the following:

*"We should cut back the ludicrously complicated appeal process, we should derail the gravy train of legal aid, fast-track those from democratic countries, and remove those who fail in their claims without further judicial interference."*

There have been many incidents of clients saved at the last minute from deportation only to be eventually granted full refugee status on appeal.

The 2002 Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act was preceded by a White Paper entitled 'Secure Borders, Safe Haven: Integration with Diversity', published in February 2002. This is a curious document. Its first half is devoted to arguing that immigrants make a large contribution to British prosperity and to meeting shortages of skills, and that Britain needs more of them. The second half is about how the government will stop them coming.

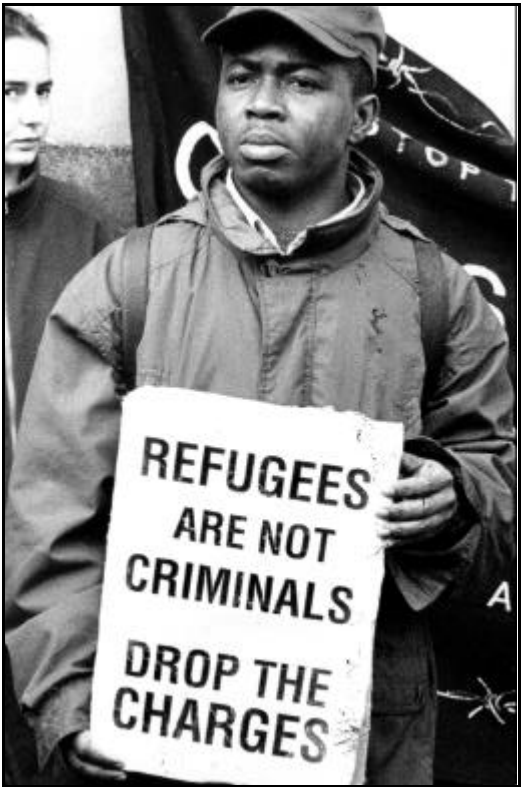
The government, like other European governments, is worried about skills and labour shortages, declining birth rates and an ageing population. It had already launched a scheme called the Highly Skilled Migrant Programme, under which certain 'highly skilled' people could be admitted without the need for them to have work permits for specific jobs. The number of work permits issued to employers has nearly doubled, from 68,400 in 1998 to 120,115 in 2002. The government allows foreign students, increasingly in demand because they pay higher fees, to stay in Britain if they complete their courses and find a job.

The hypocrisy is stunning. Printed in thick black ink at the bottom of every asylum refusal letter from the Home Office are the words "BUILDING A SAFE, JUST AND TOLERANT SOCIETY".





*Demonstration soon after the opening of Campsfield Detention Centre.*



*Demonstration for the Campsfield 9. Oxford Crown Court, Feb 9th 1998.*



*Demonstration outside Campsfield.*



*Picket on the first day of the Trial against the Campsfield 9. Oxford Crown Court, June 3rd 1998.*



*National Demonstration outside Campsfield.*





*Detainee protest at Campsfield. Aug 20th 1997.  
Photo: Oxford County Newspapers.*



*Celebration after the collapse of the Campsfield 9 trial.*



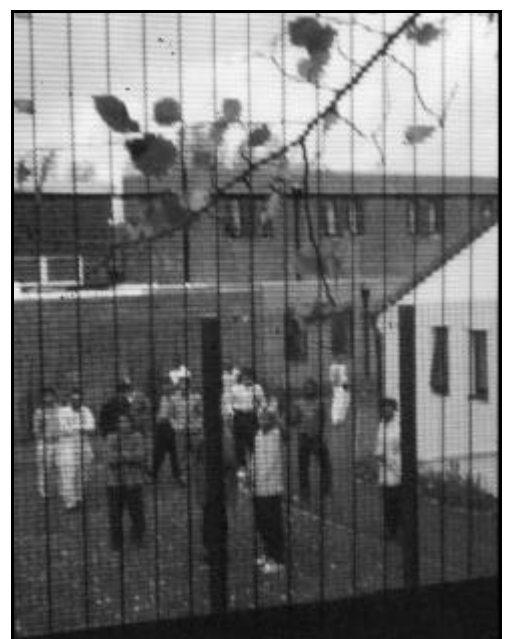
*'Scapegoat' Demo at Crown Prosecution Service, Victoria, London. April 29th 1998.*



*Student-led protest at Heathrow terminal 1, on the day that cash benefits were taken from half of all asylum seekers. May 5th 1996.*



*Oxford to London walk (with a 5,000 names petition for No. 10). Dec 1994.*



*Detainees inside campsfield (before trees were cut and fence height doubled). Feb 25th 1995.*

# OPENING THE DOORS TO FREEDOM

**Radiohead top the list of famous names giving their support to *Opening the Doors to Freedom*, a new publication that is a tribute to the tireless work of the many people in Oxford who try to secure bail for asylum seekers detained at Campsfield House Immigration Detention Centre.**



## Stars support bail for asylum seekers

Please send me  
☐ copies of *Opening the Doors to Freedom*  
 Price: £3.50 (including post and packing)

I enclose cheque for  
 £   
 payable to **Asylum Welcome**

Name

Address

Postcode

Send to  
**Anne Mobbs, Oxford Bail Support Group,  
 43A, Cardigan Street, Oxford, OX2 6BS.  
 tel: 01865 511079  
 email: anne@amobbs.freemove.co.uk**  
*Proceeds from book sales will go to the  
 Oxford Bail Support Group*

Money raised from the Oxford-based band's famous 2001 Oxford South Park concert financed the book, which includes messages of support from **Radiohead**, actress Dame **Diana Rigg**, poet **Benjamin Zephaniah** and novelist **Beverley Naidoo**, plus the story of how DJ **John Peel** helped bail a Romanian human rights activist from the immigration detention centre in Kidlington just outside Oxford.

More than a 100 asylum-seekers have been released from Campsfield over the past three years by visitors from the Oxford charity Asylum Welcome, which set up the Oxford Bail Support Group with money donated by Radiohead. *Opening the Doors to Freedom* gives an insight into the personal plight of these refugees and tells of nerve-racking court-dramas, the victories and failures of the judicial system.

Radiohead says: "We're proud that our music has helped provide funds so that the Oxford Bail Support Group can offer hope and liberation for some of those people unjustly imprisoned at Campsfield."

The authors of the book all live in Oxford - Niamh McClean, a postgraduate student who specialises in the human rights of detained asylum seekers, Anne Mobbs, co-ordinator of the Oxford Bail Support Group, and Ionel Dumitrascu, a Romanian human rights activist and trustee of Asylum Welcome.

**Opening the Doors to Freedom** published by Oxford Bail Support Group and Asylum Welcome price £3.50 (inc p&p) or from **Oxford Bail Support Group** at 43A Cardigan Street Oxford, OX2 6BS.  
 Tel- 01865 511079  
 All proceeds go to the **Oxford Bail Support Group.**

# Bail for Immigration Detainees (BID)

**BID was set up in 1998 to provide a dedicated and free bail service to detained asylum seekers and migrants. We work to improve access to bail, to raise awareness of detention issues and offer training to solicitors.**

BID is a registered charity with its main office in London and local offices in Oxford and Portsmouth. It is staffed by trained volunteers, who undertake casework and administration, by a paid Coordinator, Legal Officer, Outreach Officer and Policy and Research Officer. BID receives funding from individual donations, charitable trusts and support in kind from volunteers and pro bono advocates. There is no government funding.

Detainees are entitled to apply for bail so that they can live at liberty while their applications to stay in the UK are processed, but there are no automatic bail hearings. Public funding does exist for solicitors to make bail applications but many do not do so and this funding is currently under threat.

People seeking asylum and their children, can be detained at any stage of their asylum claim. There are no basic procedural guarantees to protect people from arbitrary detention.

People who have committed no crime, including children, vulnerable adults with mental and physical health problems, rape and torture victims, are being deprived of their liberty. Detention is often for long periods without automatic access to review by a court. Many people are detained on arrival and remain detained in breach of their human rights. They have great difficulty in accessing good legal advice appropriate medical facilities.

The Government is set to increase the use of immigration detention to 4000 as soon as places are available. Detention centres are now officially called removal centres, although our experience shows that many detainees still have ongoing cases and finally do get status here.

## BID Oxford

BID (Oxford) opened in 2001 to work with local immigration detainees at Campsfield and Bullingdon Prison. Although we still focus on Campsfield we often deal with cases further afield, particularly in Dover and Lindholme in Doncaster.

One of the most disturbing features of detention BID (Oxford) has experienced this year has been the frequent movement of detainees from one detention centre to another, often for no apparent reason and against the wishes of detainees.

This has disrupted our work considerably, but even more, we are concerned by the unsettling effect on detainees. Written statements have been sent to us by detainees of over-zealous physical restraint and treatment by Group 4 guards when moving them to other centres. Also we have received accounts of long waits in white vans (up to 8/9 hours on some occasions) when the private firm Wakenhut transport people about the country. The processing of paperwork for entry to a centre is often held up due to the numbers involved.

Lack of food, water and sleep have been described. We have reported incidents known to us to the Immigration Service, and the Chief Inspector of Prisons amongst others, but little seems to have been done.

Recently Campsfield was emptied for electrical work to take place. Our clients were spread far and wide. Now Campsfield is up and running again but less than 10% of our previous clients have been returned. Others have been moved in and we have been unable to trace many of our original group.

We have successfully run a number of cases for 'overstayers' where the right to family life for a man with children and a settled way of life has prevailed. In some cases the detainee has lived here for more than 10 years. Adjudicators have repeatedly said that the detainees in these cases are unlikely to abscond.

Over the years announcements from the Home Office have left uncertainty about how long Campsfield detention/removal centre would be kept open.

In October 2003 it was announced that Campsfield is going to be part of the permanent detention estate and enlarged to accommodate 290 male detainees compared with the 184 they can take at present. The need for BID's services is likely to escalate with increased detention and we already have long waiting lists.

**Contact:** BID (Oxford)

**Tel:** 0845 3304536

**Fax:** 0845 3304537

**E-mail:** [info@bidoxford.org](mailto:info@bidoxford.org)

## BID (Oxford) has had some powerful successes recently:

**Asylum Welcome asked us to help detainee N who spoke no English and no one else in Campsfield spoke his language for most of his 8 months there.** N had no visits from his solicitor and no telephone communication he could understand during that time. He received some papers in English which he could not read. N had been badly treated by the army in his country and had Temporary Admission on arrival here but inexplicably was detained later after being hospitalised as a result of a racist attack. At N's bail hearing the Home Office did not contest his release and the Immigration Service could offer no reason for incarcerating him for over 8 months. N was released with 1 surety and no reporting conditions. He is now living with relatives and has a new solicitor.

**M, a 17-year-old asylum-seeker had been detained on arrival by the UK Immigration Service, spending more than three months in detention.** BID asked Refugee Council Children's Section to send one of their advisers to do an age assessment on this individual. The adjudicator released M in spite of having no surety or an accommodation address. Therefore the adjudicator directed that an address to be provided by the social services. M spent another five days in detention until the social services provided him with an accommodation address. The address was provided only after BID contacted M's solicitor who threatened the social services with legal action.

**V had been in detention for four months. He spent the initial three weeks in Oakington and was then taken to a removal centre.**

Following investigations into the facts of this case BID found that V had not been served with a refusal on his asylum claim. BID listed the case in front of an adjudicator. The two pages of fictitious allegations in the bail summary proved very embarrassing for the Home Office Presenting Officer who was unable to sustain the facts in court. Due to the seriousness of the allegations of the bail summary, the adjudicator directed BID to investigate with the relevant departments of the Home Office all the allegations contained in the bail summary and then to re-list the case for bail. BID sent a detailed letter to MODCU (part of Immigration Service responsible for detainees) requesting clarifications on at least six issues raised in the bail summary. No reply had been received after seven days and BID had no option but to re-list the case for bail. Next day V was released from detention on temporary admission.

# The disgrace continues... Yarl's Wood - Europe's Biggest Refugee Prison

Yarl's Wood, designed to hold 900 asylum seekers, is Europe's biggest refugee prison. It was built inside a military complex, with high security and a series of metal barriers in all the corridors so that moving around is extremely difficult. Detainees who have been in both Campsfield and Yarl's Wood say that Yarl's Wood was much worse, and far more restrictive, in spite of its deceptive external appearance which led the tabloids to call it a five-star hotel. Like Campsfield, it is run by Group4.

February 2002 was a good month for anti-detention campaigners. Not only did Blunkett announce the long awaited closure of Campsfield but Yarl's Wood was temporarily closed by a fire that destroyed half the £100 million detention centre. - despite the extensive facilities of Europe's flagship detention centre, the department with responsibility for the fire service allowed it to be opened without installing sprinklers - hence the speed with which the fire spread through the wood-framed building once lit.

The fire started after a 51 year old female detainee -having been refused permission to go to chapel - was pinned to the ground and dragged along the floor by Group 4 guards, triggering a major incident. 11 detainees, accused of various offences including arson and violent behaviour arising from the disturbance, were tried in a three-month trial costing more than £1m, and not resulting in a single conviction for arson.

On 15th August 2003, 7 were acquitted of all charges, 3 were found guilty of violent disorder and 1 person of affray. Apart from failing to secure any arson convictions, the trial and the publicity that surrounded the event unearthed the appalling incompetence of the home office and Group4. Group4 staff were accused of inadequate detention training and being ill-equipped to handle fire and evacuation.

At one point it looked as though they could face corporate manslaughter charges after one of its officers said he had been ordered to lock in detainees after the fire had broken out. But a six-month forensic search concluded no one had died there. Further, potential defence witnesses were deported, thus depriving the accused a fair trial.

Judge Sanders was "staggered" when it emerged that the woman whose ill treatment had triggered the incident was seized by immigration officials the day after the trial began and was to be deported immediately.

Instead of praising Group4, why does the Home Office refuse to confront the reasons why Group4 were investigated for Corporate Manslaughter?

When their flagship detention centre was publicly shown to have gone badly wrong, why did the Home Office seem to simply turn around and blame detainees, but not look towards its own immigration detention policy and responsibilities? Even though the profit making Group4 sued them for £97m, they continue Group4's contract now Yarl's Wood has re-opened!



David Blunkett says "The Government, and those agencies and organisations delivering nationality, immigration & asylum services, need to demonstrate that they know what they are doing, and that they are doing it well" - some say it is blatantly evident they do not know what it they are doing, or even worse, they do. Campaigners look to the Inquiry by the Prison and Probation Ombudsman for badly needed clarifications but it seems the Home Office aren't - they re-opened Yarl's Wood, with Group4, on 28th September 2003 - way before the publication of the Inquiry. This betrays their intention to totally disregard the Inquiry's findings, as well as a lack of concern to avoid repeating the same mistakes.



*Chained March from Bedford to Yarl's Wood Detention Centre. Sept 28rd 2003.*



The Home Office have sanctioned Group4 - now discredited in two major trials as totally incompetent - running a reward and punishment scheme. "Good" behaviour gets detainees on an "enhanced" regime, and "bad" behaviour results in getting a "strike". But according to the Home Office, Yarl's Wood is supposed to be a "removal centre", where detainees are placed just 24 hours prior to removal: It's not clear when exactly within the "24 hours or so prior to removal" a pattern of "good" behaviour is to be demonstrated.

The UK is the only EU country to deprive children of their freedom through immigration detention. Yarl's Wood will predominantly be used for locking up women & children, none of whom will be accused of any crime but precisely those about whom Chief Inspector of Prisons Anne Owers said "We did not consider that they were suitable places for lengthy detention, of anything other than a few days at most."

## Inside Yarl's Wood

Behind the plush visitors' centre at Yarl's Wood - long corridors, endless roll-calls, and for some, medical neglect, and segregation for speaking out. Children torn away from school friends became 'child females' and 'child males'. Many have fled persecution and are now detained by guards paid £6.95 p.hr, including at one time - the local BNP Candidate. During the trial it emerged that the book of immigration rules was removed after a detainee had used it to claim her rights. **Officers referred to an area of the centre as "the green mile" - a tasteless reference to death row. One described a detainee as speaking gibberish. In fact she was speaking her own language.** Officers were given as little as five weeks' training before dealing with detainees.

Around the "detention estate" visitors to immigration detainees hear detainees describe the daily degrading and humiliating way in which they are treated, medical neglect, being dragged off to airports without removal notices, assault.

Others getting through day by day, in constant fear that it may be them next. Frightened of reprisals whilst they are still in detention, and afterwards, many feel they cannot speak out. It all goes on behind locked doors - leaving few avenues to evidence and bring to the public's attention.

Don't waste time feeling pity for detainees - feel angry, because it's being done in your name. At some point we stop being innocent bystanders and become complicit in the process unless we stand up and speak out.

**Contact:** Campaign To Stop Arbitrary Detentions At Yarl's Wood

**Tel:** 07786 517379,

**Email:** sady\_campaign@yahoo.co.uk

**Sat 13th Dec 2003**  
**Yarl's Wood**  
**demonstration**  
**12noon Bedford**  
**Town Centre and**  
**3pm at Yarl's Wood**  
**Close Yarl's Wood!**  
**End immigration**  
**detention now!**

## No one is illegal

Soon after we set up the Campaign to Close Campsfield we had a big meeting of supporters in the Oxford Town Hall and discussed the objectives of the campaign. We all agreed that we wanted Campsfield closed and also that we wanted the end of all detention of asylum seekers and migrants who had committed no crime.

Then we had a discussion about whether we were against immigration controls. The campaign was, and is, broad-based, and there were some who were not opposed to all immigration controls.

Eventually we agreed that the third objective of the campaign would be 'No racist immigration controls'.

Most of us believed and still believe that there can be no such thing as non-racist immigration controls.

Racism is inherent in immigration controls. - it is the explanation for their introduction in 1905 and then in 1962; they pander to the racists and, far from eliminating racism, they feed it. So, for many or most of us, to oppose racist immigration controls is the same as to oppose all immigration controls.



Ten years of campaigning have shown that, though we can win some partial and temporary victories, the government's desperate attempts to stop people coming to this country (or to convince the racists that it is trying to do so) have led to more and more vicious attacks on refugees and migrants. Their suffering is not some unintended consequence of immigration controls. It is deliberate government policy. It will not end until immigration controls are abolished altogether.

To try and win more people to this view, to make the abolition of immigration controls more central to campaigns in support of refugees and migrants and to propose the setting up of groups similar to many which exist in the rest of Europe, five of us produced in Manchester a manifesto called 'NO ONE IS ILLEGAL'. The manifesto is on our web-site at

**www.noii.org.uk**



# Barbed Wire Britain

## Network to end refugee and migrant detention

Set up in 2000, Barbed Wire Britain links local campaigns against detention with each other and to concerned national bodies including the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, National Coalition of Anti Deportation Campaigns and Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers.



Together with the last two organisations, Barbed Wire Britain (BWB) convened a successful conference on the rights of migrants and refugees in Manchester in March 2001. Since then a series of meetings at the Diorama centre near Portland Place in London has planned a further conference.

Barbed Wire Britain meets from time to time, mainly after demonstrations. The last meeting, in late 2002, gave training in getting publicity and information out via its website [www.barbedwirebritain.org.uk](http://www.barbedwirebritain.org.uk) -which provides information on detention and events. The treasurer of BWB, Gill Baden, has coordinated a series of BWB meetings with MPs at the Houses of Parliament in Westminster, specifically on detention. These have been particularly useful in getting Early Day Motions tabled, and in briefing MPs (very few of whom actually turn up although some 150 get invited). They are organised with Neil Gerrard MP, who chairs the All Party Group on Refugees.

BWB has published a collection of writings by immigration detainees in the UK, *Voices from Detention*, edited by two former detainees, Gabriel Nkwelle (one of the authors) and Ionel Dumitrascu, and by Liz Peretz and Jo Garcia.

These are very powerful pieces-some very personal, some very critical of government policy-and deserve wide circulation. So far 500 copies have been distributed and a reprint of 300 is in hand (get yours by phoning 01865 558145-free but contributions welcome).

Members of the BWB steering group of representatives from local campaigns attended two meetings at the European Parliament in Brussels this year. Called under the auspices of the Green and Independents group of MEPs and held in the Petra Kelly Room, the meetings have compiled information about detention in different EU states and set up a useful online discussion and information group (Email: [migeurope@ras.eu.org](mailto:migeurope@ras.eu.org)).

Proposals for Europe-wide anti-detention days of action and on lobbying the European parliament and the Interior Ministers (who decide immigration and asylum policy in secret) were discussed at a special seminar on immigration detention, in which BWB is a leading initiator and participant, at the European Social Forum (ESF) in Paris in early November 2003.

East Kent Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers is the body campaigning to close Dover "removal" centre. Tom McGowan and others work closely with refugees and support groups around the now closed Red Cross camp at Sangatte near Calais.

They staged a day of action starting with a demo at the Dover centre attended by French and British people who then crossed to join others at a demo at Sangatte. Members of the Droits Devant group in France came over for a pre-ESF discussion with Campaign to Close Campsfield members in late October.

And members of the campaign have been to meetings called by PICUM (Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants) in Brussels.

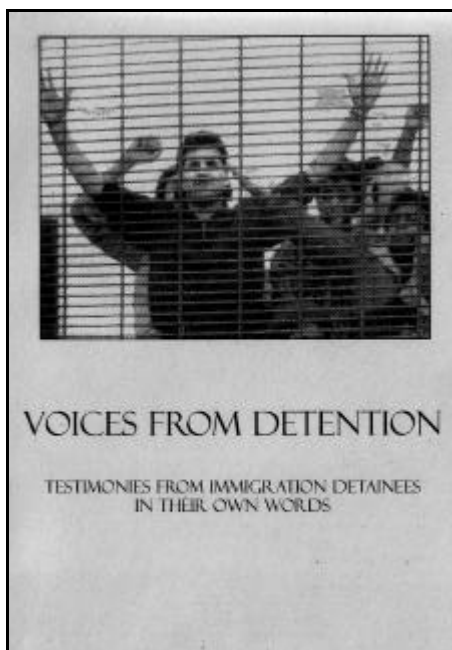
Finally, BWB has two splendid banners, based on the sticker reproduced here, that are available for use at local or national actions/conferences.

They have appeared many times outside the Yarl's Wood trial hearings at Harrow Crown Court, and at demonstrations and conferences in the UK and abroad.

### Escape?

Arrived  
Immigration  
Interrogation  
Detention: detained, imprisoned  
Group 4: abuse, threat, discrimination  
Case: adjudicator, hearing, appeal dismissed  
Meanwhile: abuse repeated, threats  
Fed up: protests, demonstrate  
Arrested, interrogated, charged  
Court, magistrate, solicitors  
Remanded, suppressed, but supported  
Court, adjourned, Crown, barristers, court case  
And still  
They continue to remind me of  
Horrors faced back home

A prisoner in HMP Bullingdon



[www.barbedwirebritain.org.uk](http://www.barbedwirebritain.org.uk)

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**+44 (0) 1865 726804**  
**+44 (0) 1993 703994**  
**+44 (0) 7767 414714**  
**+44 (0) 208 571 5019**

**Barbed Wire Britain**  
**17c West End, Witney,**  
**Oxon OX28 1NQ, UK**

Local campaign details on the website or by phoning the above.



# Oxford's Double Shame

## Bicester Accommodation center to go ahead

*Report by Bicester Refugee Support Group*

Since the last edition of The Campsfield Monitor was published, it has been announced that Campsfield is not to close but is after all to be expanded. Thus, there will be for the foreseeable future, not one but two major institutions, euphemistically and inaccurately termed the Government's "removals estate", are within the north Oxfordshire district of Cherwell, north of Oxford.

In Spring 2002, Bicester was earmarked by the Home Office as one of the proposed sites in the pilot scheme to house asylum seekers in Accommodation Centres. The Centre is to house 750 asylum seekers with all facilities and support provided in-house. It will be in a rural area about four miles outside Bicester, adjacent to a military base and a prison. Residents will be expected to remain in the centre and to participate in structured activities. They will not be allowed to work and will be expected to live on a welfare payment set far below standard benefit levels.

Bicester Action Group (BAG) was formed by villagers living close to the proposed site. They put posters up in Bicester warning the town of increased crime, a threat to our culture and a drop in house prices if the centre went ahead. The British National Party and National Front, riding on the xenophobia encouraged by BAG, began campaigning locally.

Bicester Refugee Support (BRS) was formed in order to put forward pro-refugee views about the Accommodation Centre. While we would welcome asylum seekers and refugees to Bicester, we believe that the size, location and regime of the proposed centre are inappropriate for their needs.

In August 2003, it was announced that John Prescott had decided to overrule the recommendation of the independent Public Inquiry planning Inspector and push ahead with its plans, despite condemnation by every refugee support organisation in Britain. Even the local council opposes the center and plans to judicially review the Deputy's Prime Minister's decision. BRS is planning now for the prospect of hundreds of asylum seekers being forced to live in Bicester. So far, neither the government nor our local representatives have made the slightest effort to prepare local people for this possibility, but instead have allowed rumour and fear to dominate public opinion.

We continue to oppose the Accommodation Centre on humanitarian grounds. We are campaigning to change the tone of the debate in Bicester to one more sympathetic towards refugees.



*Cycle Ride between Bicester and Campsfield Removals Centre, Kidlington, Oxford. (31 May 2003).*

At the same time, we are lobbying to ensure that if the Centre goes ahead facilities and support are adequate. We will be involving ourselves in voluntary work with asylum seekers when the Centre goes ahead.

We need ideas, volunteers and funding. If you would be interested in helping us to achieve our aims you would be welcome to attend our meetings, which usually take place in Bicester. Or you could show your support by taking out membership or affiliating your organisation to BRS: details are available on our web site. Please offer your support today and help to build a positive future for Bicester.

**Links: BRS Membership & Affiliation :**  
**[www.bicesterrefugeesupport.org.uk](http://www.bicesterrefugeesupport.org.uk)**

Bicester Refugee Support  
 PO Box 231, Bicester OX26 6ZN Tel: 01869 240852

# Campaign to Close Campsfield

Campsfield House is an Immigration Detention Centre at Kidlington, six miles from Oxford. It is a prison run for private profit by Group 4, supervised by Home Office immigration officials.

It used to be a youth detention centre, but it re-opened as an Immigration Detention Centre in November 1993. The local parish council was opposed to it, but their wishes were overruled by the Home Office.

Following Blunkett's decision to expand the centre, there may be up to 290 detainees in Campsfield House at any one time. Most are political refugees fleeing danger, torture and even death from countries such as Nigeria, Algeria, Afghanistan, Turkey, Iraq, the former Yugoslavia and Zimbabwe. They are held without charge, without time limit, without proper reasons given, and without proper access to legal representation. Amnesty International report that these are breaches of internationally recognised human rights.



*Photo taken through a quarter-inch diameter bolt hole in the security fence . Campsfield Detention Centre. Sept 17th 2000.*

## The Close Campsfield campaign aims to:

- Close Campsfield, other detention centres, and detention wings in prisons;
- Stop immigration detentions and imprisonment;
- Stop racist deportations;
- Repeal immigration laws which reinforce racism.

The Campaign to Close Campsfield is supported by refugee organisations, trades unions, political parties, student organisations and religious groups.

## How you can get involved

We hold monthly campaign planning meetings on the first Tuesday of every month from 7pm at Oxford Town Hall. Everyone is welcome.

We demonstrate outside Campsfield on the last Saturday of every month. These demos are from 12 noon to 2pm at the main gates, Langford Lane, Kidlington (Oxford bus, 2B/C or D, or lifts from outside Debenhams at 11:30).

You can affiliate to the Close Campsfield Campaign as an individual or an organisation. The cost of joining / affiliation for individuals is £5 (£3 unwaged) a year. The cost for groups is £10, or £20 a year (to include minutes of meetings). You can send cheques made out to: The Campaign to Close Campsfield.

You can also contact us by phone on 01865 558 145 or 01865 726 804 or 01993 703 994.

If you would like more information about the Close Campsfield Campaign or how to get involved, please see our website.

[www.closecampsfield.org.uk](http://www.closecampsfield.org.uk)

Close Campsfield Stop detentions Stop deportations

# TEN YEARS TOO LONG!

1993 2003

## Saturday 29th November

**10 a.m. BIKE RIDE FOR FREEDOM** cycle to join demo  
Meet at Martyrs' Memorial, St Giles, Oxford

**12-2 p.m. DEMONSTRATION**  
Campsfield main gates Langford Lane, Kidlington, 6 miles north of Oxford

**London coach** 9.45 a.m. King's Cross £10/£5/asylum seekers free: book please.  
Details of other pick-up points: 07903 162 175

**Oxford coach** 11 a.m. St Giles, Oxford (and buses 26/4/d from Cornmarket to Spires Business Park)

**Speakers:** Bill Morris (TGWU), Ola Alatise, Emma Ginn, Lucky Jacobs, Evan Harris MP, Tim Baster (BID)

**Music:** Oxford Sol Samba Band supported by Rhythms of Resistance  
Bring banners, music, placards, balloons, especially visible over 20 ft fence. Detainees will appreciate.

**3 p.m. TOWN CENTRE PROTEST** Broad Street, Oxford

Campaign to Close Campsfield Inquiries: 01865 558145/726804 Supported by SERTUC Photo: Migrant Media Design: Al Cane